



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Perfectionism and Forgiveness Role in the Prediction of Marital Conflict

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### ABSTRACT

*The basic truth in marital life is that all couples are faced with problems and conflicts and various factors are involved in the creation and continuation of them. Forgiveness and perfectionism are among the factors that could affect the conflicts between the couples. Therefore, present research is conducted with the goal to observe the role of perfectionism and forgiveness in prediction of marital conflicts. Present research is descriptive and from solidarity branch. The statistical sample consisted of all couples in Bandar Abbas (a city located in south of Iran) statistical sample includes 175 people of Bandar Abbas couples who are chosen through sampling method. To collect data, FFS, MCQ and also multidimensional perfectionism scale of Frost et al are used. Data analysis is done through Pearson correlation statistical methods and Simultaneous multiple regression analysis. The results showed: forgiveness and perfectionism include 14/7% of changes in marital conflict that is meaningful in  $p < 0/001$  level and also forgiveness is meaningful in  $-0/366$  levels in the regression equation while perfectionism had no meaningful effect in equation. According to gained results from the research, couples relation could be improved and recovered and also their conflict could be reduced through teaching forgiveness strategies to the couples.*

*Keywords: Forgiveness, Marital conflict, Perfectionism*

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### INTRODUCTION

Marital life is one of the most universal human institutions that is composed of two people with different abilities, talents, needs, interests and in a word; with different characters. An intimate marital relationship requires that couples learn to communicate with each other and be different [1]. In many cultures, family and marital relationship is considered as the primary source of support and affection and also the couples are asked to show an exclusive relationship, honesty, love, affection, warmth and support. Almost all couples report high level of satisfaction at the beginning of marital life, but this satisfaction decreases over the time [13]. In fact, in the family life cycle process, some problems could be occurred and endangers life peace for a period of time. Such issues at micro level are related to structure and functions of the family and in macro level are related to social structures [14].

Conflict occurs parallel to love in marital relations and when one's action is interferes with somebody else. Also as two people get closer, conflict power is increasing too [9]. Some experts in family sociology point unavoidable family conflict following classical school of conflict theorists in their opinion; occurring conflict is considered as the nature of the family institution. While the truth of family conflict can't be denied, necessity to study and research would be focused, as just through scientific researches, the rate of governing conflict on marital life and also the related factors could be recognized. It is considerable to mention that family conflict nuisance isn't limited to family and also lead to some problems in the institutional and social level. In the family institution level, occurred conflict results not only cause problem for all family members, but relatives and friends would be affected too [19].

Systematic therapists consider conflict as kind of dispute to own power sources and stations to obtain partner scores and increase his/her scores. It is clear that dispute parties are willing to damage each other, neutralize the techniques and get each other out of the way. Therefore existing marital conflict is

due to reaction towards individual differences and sometimes it is harsh somehow feelings of anger, violence, revenge, hatred, jealous and verbal and physical abuse in relations between spouses govern the relation between the couples and emerge as destructive status [41]. Offered two kinds of conflicts in marital relations: constructive conflict and destructive conflict. In constructive conflict the focus is on problem solving and there is no positive respect and trust, but negative excitement and few verbal responses between the partners. In destructive conflict the couples attack each other instead of solving the problem. In this conflict through blame and criticize, each one is trying to influence another one and use negative opinion about each other and in this case there is no proper relation between them. In this relation futile and destructive argument, distrust, disrespect, insult, hatred, hostility and abuse could be seen. Therefore it could be said that marital conflict is kind of marital relation with hostile acts like an insult, blame, criticism and physical attack and couples feel revenge, hatred and anger and everyone feels that another one is incompatible and inappropriate person that any him/her. [12], it is considerable to mention that dispute in couples relation is natural due to common decisions which are made. The rate of conflict is located in scope of obvious differences in couple's opinion to harsh dispute in goals, values and ambitions. Solving dispute is inseparable part of successful relation and it could be said that: the annoyance which is occurred due to marriage violations could prevent the successful solution of the conflict, but forgiving another party for occurred violations is a powerful vehicle to terminate a disrupted or painful relation and would provide proper conditions for reconciliation with the wrongdoer. Therefore forgiveness could have basic functions for long term results and even short term deals. Briefly forgiveness could eliminate the usage of conflict ineffective strategies which are gained through the partner unforgiving violations and abuses. [22]. Hargrave considers forgiveness as an attempt to protect love and trust in relations and terminate damaging bias. In this regards, the results of the researches by), [1], showed that: forgiveness is having negative and meaningful relation with marital conflicts and Ehteshamzadeh, Makvandi and Bagheri [26] and also, in their researches realized that forgiveness is having positive and meaningful relation with marital satisfaction.

Clinical case studies have shown that: forgiveness could be profitable for the people who experienced deep emotional pain due to unfair behavior. Also forgiveness in controversial interpersonal conflict situations against pride and revenge could lead to positive behaviors and reactions. It is considerable to mention that forgiveness shouldn't be considered as the terms such as: Reconciliation, lawamnesty, renunciation and forgetfulness, but forgiveness is interpersonal process by which aspects of cognitive, emotional and individual behavior against the error and wrongdoers would be changed. In fact forgiveness is conscious and voluntary motivation that leads to reduction of resignation, anger and revenge against the wrongdoer and increase positive feelings and would be replaced with negative feelings [7], defines forgiveness as: forgiveness recognizes, predicts and tries to act against retaliation law. Forgiveness is Voluntary renunciation process from anger or hatred of harmful committed acts. It is considerable to mention that forgiveness refers to itself. It means: the action which is done due to the act and the individual and partners health would guarantee the relation. Forgiveness wouldn't damage the generous person and it doesn't occur spontaneously and unexpectedly, but during the time and as a part of growth process and change. There is no symmetry, even though symmetry result could be followed and always it is true (Hill 2001). Observing presented definitions indicate that forgiveness isn't just a moral act, but a healing process that could be used as therapeutic interventions in family counseling, especially in the relations between members (husband and wife, parent and child, siblings, etc) in case of using forgiveness in families, it could be asserted that forgiveness would be presented when a member of family cause dissatisfaction or annoyance of family members by his/her actions or assertions. In this regard Worthington believes that: family members can't live without annoying each other. It means: in family relation, existing conflict and annoyance would be inevitable [10].

Generally the source of interpersonal conflicts is rooted in interpersonal differences. In terms of attitudes, behavior and personality of people is different. Realizing this difference and effect of them on behavior of the individuals and also understanding the factors that influence on marital conflict would be effective on understanding the process of conflict and reduction of its incidence and would lead to effective solution of conflicts. Also as forgiveness is one of the strategies which are effective in decrease of family conflicts and many researches are done about forgiveness therapy theory out of Iran, but in Iran researches about forgiveness is at the beginning of the path [2]. On the other hand, according to conducted researches, many researchers observed the relation between forgiveness variables, conflicts or perfectionism, forgiveness with marital satisfaction variable inside and outside of the Iran, but there is no research to focus on the role of perfectionism variables and forgiveness to predict marital conflict, so present research is done with the goal of observing the role of perfectionism and forgiveness in predicting marital conflicts.

## METHOD

Present research is applied one from nature point of view and type of study is quantitative. From psychology point of view this research is descriptive. The statistic population of this research is couples from Bandar Abbas province. Therefore statistic population of this research is unknown. Sampling method in present research is available. To determine sample capacity, sample capacity determination formula is used from normal population with assuming infinite population using Cochran formula. In this regard, first a prototype of 20 was gained from the population and accordingly sample variable variance for statistic population was calculated 0/3379. According to gained variance, the capacity of required sample in different levels, sampling error and confident level of %95 for 175 people was calculated.

### Research tools

In order to collect data in this research, following questionnaires were used:

Frost perfectionism scale et al (FMPS) it is a 35-items questionnaire. Answering to the questions is adjusted in 5 point Likert scale (1 to 5). The questionnaire consists of six sub-scales:

Extreme concern about errors (CM), Understand the criticisms of parents (PC) understand the expectations of the parents (PE), Tend to be skeptical (DA), Tend to be disciplined and organized (O) and personal performance criteria (PS) The total perfectionism score is gained through total of five sub-scales of six sub-scales except discipline subscale. Frost et al (1990) reported 0/90 Cronbach's alpha for the total perfectionism, 0/88 for Subscales of the concerns of mistake, 0/84 parent's expectations, 0/84 parent's criticism, Skepticism in action 0/77, Personal criteria 0/83 and Organizing 0/93. These tools are highly valid. In Persian version, the reliability of this questionnaire is calculated through internal consistency method. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the total test is reported 0/85, concerns of mistake 0/83, understand parent's criticism 0/66, Understand parent's expectations 0/73, tend to be skeptical 0/70, tend to be organized and disciplined 0/88 and personal performance criteria 0/67, for positive perfectionism 0/82, negative perfectionism 0/86.

Forgiveness assessment scale (FFS) this questionnaire is made by (25) and is (normalized by Saif and Bahari 2001) and includes following dimensions: Realistic understanding, recognition, compensation, action amendment and improvement feeling. According to four-point scale, positive questions would be scored as following: score 4 for point 4 and score 1 to point 1. Also negative questions would be scored inversely. The highest score is 160 and the lowest score is 40. The total of highest scores means that: there is high rate of forgiveness in a family in a way that respondent experienced.

Marital conflict questionnaire (MCQ): it is a 42-items instrument that is made to assess wife and husband conflicts and it is based on clinical experiences of [33]. This questionnaire assesses seven dimensions of marital conflicts such as: fewer cooperation, sexual relationship reduction, emotional reactions increase, children support increase, personal relationships enhance with relatives, partner relationship reduction with relatives and friends, finances separation from each other. For each question 5 choices is considered and they are scored from 1 to 5. The highest score of whole questionnaire is 210 and the lowest one is 42. In this tool, higher score means more conflict and lower score means better relation and less conflict. For whole questionnaire on a group of 32 people is equal to 0/53 and for 7 sub-scale is as following: fewer cooperation 0/30, sexual relationship reduction 0/50, emotional reactions increase 0/73, children support increase 0/60, individual relation increase with the relatives 0/64, family relation reduction with wife relatives and friends 0/64, finance separation 0/51. Marital conflicts questionnaire is having perfect content validity. At test analysis stage, after initial performance and calculation of the correlation of each question the whole questionnaire and the scale, 13 questions were deleted from 55 questions [18].

SPSS 21 was used to analyze data in this research. It is considerable to mention that data analysis is done in two descriptive and illative levels. In this regard, mean indices and standard deviation were used in descriptive level and multiple regression analysis was used in inferential level.

## RESULTS

According to the gained data from 175 respondents in observed sample, 114 people were men and 61 people were women. Also 8 people are under age range of 20, 39 people are in age range of 20 to 30, 49 people are in age range of 31 to 40, 40 people are in age range of 41 to 50 and 39 people are in age range of more than 51. Regarding marriage duration of sample group, marriage duration %21/1 are under 5, %37/7 are between 6 to 10, 20% are between 11 to 15, %10/9 are between 16 to 20 and %6/3 are more than 20. Regarding the number of children, the results showed that: 24% of respondent didn't have any children, %39/4 are having 1 child, %27/4 people are having 2 children, %6/9 are having 3 children and %2/3 are having 4 children or more.

In table 1, Descriptive indices of perfectionism, forgiveness and marital conflict and their dimensions, including the mean and standard deviation are presented.

**Table 1: the mean and standard deviation of the variables**

Extreme concern about errors (CM)	standard deviation	Mean
Understanding parent's expectations (PE)	0/57031	2/3750
Understanding parent's expectations (PE)	0/60212	2/4043
Tend to be skeptical (DA)	0/71846	3/3714
Tend to be organized (O)	0/82279	2/7600
Personal performance criteria (PS)	0/53845	2/8819
Realistic understanding	0/66735	2/7971
Recognition	0/38255	1/7643
Compensation	0/45213	1/7907
Propitiation	0/41597	1/9214
Improvement feeling	0/36227	1/8950
Marital conflict	0/34231	1/9786
Extreme concern about errors (CM)	0/40773	4/3502

**Table 2: Pearson correlation coefficients between the variables**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1- Extreme concern about errors	1									
2 - Understanding parent's criticism	0/450	1								
3- understanding parent's expectations	1/343	0/212	1							
4- Tend to be skeptical	0/475	0/512	0/350	1						
5- Tend to be organized	0/465	0/466	0/55	0/466	1					
6- Personal performance criteria	0/37	0/634	0/333	0/466	0/570	1				
7- Realistic understanding	0/087	0/197	0/087	0/140	0/04	0/104	1			
8- Recognition	0/561	0/027	0/011	0/064	0/062	0/061	0/106	1		
9- Compensation	0/550/452	0/018	0/022	0/052	0/134	0/059	0/164	1		
10- marital conflict	0/102	0/319	0/179	0/391	0/395	0/165	0/004	0/099	0/05	
	P<0/01 **			P<0/05 *						

Table 2 shows Pearson correlation coefficients between studied variables .according to datamentioned in this table, coefficient between error recognition and verification, atonement, appeasement, individual's understanding from parent's criticism, tend to be organized and improvement feeling factors is negative with marital conflicts, while the other factors such as :personal performance criteria, realistic understanding, extreme concern about errors, understanding parent's expectations and tend to be skeptical is having positing coefficient with marital conflict and among them personal performance criteria and realistic understanding are having statistic meaningfulness.

**Table 3: Summary results of multiple regression using criterion variables of marital conflict**

Variables	Multiple correlation coefficient (R)	The coefficient of determination (R Square)	Adjusted coefficient of determination Adjusted R (Square)	Standard error Std. error of ) (the Estimate
Forgiveness And Perfectionism	0/385	0/147	0/137	0/37873

Table 3 shows the relation between predicting variables and criteria variable. The results show that: rate of multiple correlation (R), between perfectionism and forgiveness is 0/385 with criterion marital conflict variable. Also the coefficient of determination in this table shows that 0/147 of the variance of criterion variables (marital conflict) is explained with perfectionism and forgiveness. To understand whether this rate is meaningful or not, we should use variance analysis test and the result is shown in table 4.

**Table 4: Results of variance analysis to determine the significance of regression model**

Change Source	Total Square	Degree of Freedom	Square mean	F statistic	Meaningful level
Regression	4/256	2	2/218	14/835	0/001
Remained	24/670	172	0/143		
Total	28/926	174			

According to  $F(14/835)$  and the meaningful level of (0/001) in table 4, it could be concluded that regression model is proper and the change showed by model isn't haphazard. Also this issue shows that dependent variables (perfectionism and forgiveness dimensions) are able to explain variables Criterion (marital conflict).

**Table5: Standard and non-standard regression coefficients**

Significant level	T statistic	standard coefficient	non-standard	standard
<b>0/001</b>	<b>20/495</b>	<b>- 0/245</b>		<b>5/030</b>
<b>0/127</b>	<b>1/535</b>	<b>0/108</b>		<b>0/060</b>
<b>0/001</b>	<b>-5/201</b>	<b>-0/366</b>		<b>0/096</b>

Table5 shows the effect of predicting variables in regression equation .accordingly, there is meaningful level of 0/001 for forgiveness (meaningful level under0/01), so it having role in explaining marital conflict criterion change and regression model. According to the fact that beta coefficient (-0/366) is negative for this dimension, the relation between this dimension and marital conflict is reverse. It means: increase in forgiveness would increase marital conflicts. On the other hand, the coefficient shows that, the role of this dimension in predicting marital conflicts is equal to 0/366. Also perfectionism meaningful level is more than 0/05 that indicates: the effect of this variable in regression equation isn't meaningful without having any role in regression equation.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of this research show that: forgiveness is having negative and meaningful relation with marital conflicts and can predict marital conflicts. The results are in consistent with the results of which showed: there is positive and meaningful relation between forgiveness and marital satisfaction, but they aren't in corresponded with the other results based on negative meaningful relation between perfectionism and marital satisfaction. In this regard, the results show the existence of multilateral relation between forgiveness, perfectionism and intimacy with marital satisfaction and it is reported that forgiveness is the best predictor of couple's satisfaction rate.

Also gained results are in corresponded with following presented results: Gordon et al 2009 in research showed that: there is prominent meaningful relation between couple's forgiveness, marital satisfaction and couple's performance in life. Hill 2001 believed that: forgiveness in marital life in spite of increasing marital correspondence level could solve martial conflicts. Macalaf et al 2001 realized that forgiveness could decrease anger and hatred and solve many of couple's conflicts. Fincham and Stoom 2004 realized in their research that forgiveness and training could decrease the conflicts among the couples and increase their capability to solve their problems. in a research showed that: there is meaningful relation between forgiveness and two aspects of mental health (positive emotion and life satisfaction). Fincham et al in their researches showed that: the couples in initial levels of forgiveness (such as experience of confusion, withdrew from his wife or husband and avenge) report lower level of marital satisfaction, while the couples who were in final levels of forgiveness (such as suppression of anger, experiencing positive emotions toward her husband) show higher level of marital satisfaction. The results gained from the research of Salahian *et al* (2010) showed that: Emotional Intelligence and couple's forgiveness are predicting marital conflict variable. The result of the research by [28] showed that: there is positive meaningful relation between forgiveness and marital satisfaction.

T explain this issue, it could be told that: forgiveness could be defined as Interpersonal and positive social change to an error in interpersonal field [41]. According to this definition, forgiveness is called to the changes which could only involve decrease in negative feelings or decrease in negative feelings along with positive feeling increase. In both cases, this change is a positive social change with the aim to make more positive social interactions. When a person forgives somebody, the relation between weak marital relation, marital satisfaction and desecration would be balanced. Desecration could have negative effects on relations, marital satisfaction and also family members. Forgiveness ability can lead to relation fixation and marital satisfaction increase. [35]. The people, who are able to forgive their wives/husbands, believe in marital life sanctity and this ability could lead in marital relation fixation and also satisfaction [20].

The gained results in this research along with the results from [30] research showed that: the couples with abnormal perfectionism, reported less satisfaction and quality from their marital life, while the couples with normal perfectionism are having higher relation quality and were having higher marital relation satisfaction. Also the results of Haring et al research indicate negative relation between perfectionism and marital life quality and satisfaction, as in this result there is no relation between

perfectionism and marital conflicts. It is considerable to mention that, the reason of this incompatibility could be due to statistic population.

According to the results of present research and as the family role is prominent in all institutions, organizations and social institutions and all scholars in the society and all pioneers in the field of family emphasized its importance and according to the fact that no society could be proper without proper family [31] so family therapists could train forgiveness, as training the strategies of forgiveness to the couples could have main role in improvement and recovery of relations and activating the abilities such as forgiveness could have effective role in protecting family health.

What confirms the importance of forgiveness is healing nature of that therapeutic intervention .forming a family and protecting family and preventing its collapse could be trained. The abilities such as forgiveness could have prominent role in family, as forgiveness is considered as positive and acceptable action of individuals [18]. Also according to [25], forgiveness in family consultant could lead the family members to have bilateral, balanced and safe relation.

One of the limitations of this research is that the research is sectional and also the research population. Correlation of the research project explains the results from attribution reasons. Using self-report scales that can provide trends in responds is another limitation of the research. Along with research limitations which are mentioned, future researchers are offered to observe this research in other regions with different cultures, as the data of this research are collected through specific spatial domain and through this way comparison would be possible and also the generalize ability of findings would be increased. Also used conceptual framework would be expanded by increasing some of the interfering factors such as: Demographic characteristics of spouses, other influencing dimensions marital conflict, so it is recommended that the researches in future should expand mentioned factors and also theoretical view in this field.

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